



# 2002

## Session Report

Representative

### Sharon Tomiko Santos

Dear neighbors,

Our state faces three major challenges: traffic gridlock, the poor economy and public safety.

In this newsletter, I'll tell you a bit about these problems — and how we're working for solutions in the House of Representatives.

**Mobility** — Traffic is the biggest problem the Legislature will face, a problem that the 37th District has not escaped. We've got to find common-sense solutions to traffic gridlock so our daily commute is no longer a source of stress and frustration.

**Opportunity** — Our state has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, and the people in our district have been hit hardest by the Boeing layoffs and economic downturn. It's imperative that we boost the economy and restore our state's prosperity. Every able and willing person deserves the chance to live the American Dream.

**Community safety** — It's clear that we need to make our state safer from terrorism attacks. We also need to do a better job of preventing crime rather than spending all of our time and resources on cleaning up the mess afterwards.

I'd like to hear your thoughts about traffic, jobs, and community safety. What's your experience? What solutions do you support?

There's nothing more important to me than hearing directly from you. Thank you again for taking the time to read this, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

SHARON TOMIKO SANTOS  
State Representative  
37th District



## Keeping in Touch

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## Traffic, security and jobs

### Traffic gridlock

Seattle is a great place to live and work – but we need to do something about the traffic.

It's frustrating and stressful to start our days with a drive to work in stop-and-go traffic, then not know how long it'll take to get home at night to see our families.

We must find common-sense solutions to get our state moving again.

Roads and highways are the circulation system for our economy. Gridlock chokes our prosperity and harms quality of life.

To find real solutions, we should examine how this problem started.

### The cause of gridlock

The equation is simple: more people + more cars = traffic gridlock.

Since 1980, our population grew by 43 percent – and miles driven on our roads and highways jumped 88 percent. However, spending on transportation stayed at 1980 levels, keeping up with inflation, but falling farther and farther behind our state's growth and needs.

### The disease costs more than any cure

Some politicians say they'd rather do nothing, that traffic is only a problem for Seattle.



I disagree. All businesses have to get goods to market, and more than any other state in the nation, Washington state relies on international trade. That means apples from Wenatchee and onions from Walla Walla have to travel highways and railroads — and arrive at Seattle ports — before being sold around the world.

Traffic gridlock hurts the economy of our entire state. And doing nothing about traffic will cost you and me more than any possible transportation plan could.

You and I are already paying hidden taxes due to traffic:

- Each year, the average driver in our area loses 53 hours and \$930 sitting in traffic.
- Gridlock costs businesses and workers \$2 billion a year in productivity.

A plan to unclog traffic would cost the average driver about a \$1.50 a month, about a nickel a day.

### A boost for the economy

A transportation plan would:

- create 20,000 construction jobs, all family wage jobs;
- cost you less at the pump – gas prices are 40 to 60 cents lower than last summer, and current proposals call for only a 4 to 8 cent gas tax;
- give us all more time with our families and less time on the road.

### Ending transportation welfare

Right now, all taxpayers in King County and other large counties actually subsidize transportation projects in rural counties, places where there's never a rush hour.

Ferry County gets \$9.45 in highway projects for every dollar its citizens pay in gas tax. You can guess where the missing \$8.45 comes from.

Ending transportation welfare would free up money for where it's needed: King, Snohomish and Pierce counties.

# Representative **Sharon Tomiko Santos**

## **Jobs**

Washington and Oregon were hit the hardest of all states by the national recession, with the highest unemployment rates in the country. Up to 30,000 Boeing workers are losing their jobs since airline travel is down so much.



A transportation plan would directly create jobs — and boost our economy — but we can and must do more.

We're moving quickly in the House to restore prosperity in our state.

House Democrats formed a task force to focus on creating jobs and making our state more competitive.

## **Brainpower is key to the economy**

Education is a crucial part of any solution.

Today, companies rely more on brainpower than horsepower. Our goal should be giving the best possible education to every child, and to having the best opportunities in the nation for workers who need to retrain for other professions.

Last year, citizens voted overwhelmingly to pass two initiatives that improve local schools, reduce class size and give teachers fairer pay.

Because of the budget crunch, there aren't discretionary funds for new programs or ideas. But I



believe there are reforms and innovations we can try in our schools that involve time and energy instead of money.

## **Getting families and the community involved**

Research shows that family and community involvement in local schools is a huge factor in how well students perform and achieve.

Other factors include (a) the number and variety of books in a child's home, (b) the expectations that families have of their children and (c) how much television a child watches.

Families have a huge influence on all of these things. And community members can be vital mentors and role models for students.

We need to smooth the way for local schools to better tap into families and the local community.

## **Public safety and security**

People are rightfully concerned not just about crime but terrorism. What can we do to improve safety?



A new House committee will focus exclusively on community security. We will look at ways of protecting our airports, gas pipelines, drinking water and power systems.

There'll be dozens of proposed laws to increase safety, but I believe we must be equally vigilant about protecting our civil liberties and freedoms.

## **Prevention**

Cities, counties and the state are spending more and more of our tax dollars on cleaning up the mess caused by crime. King and other counties spend 70 percent or more of the county budget, and prisons are one of the fastest-growing expenses of our state budget.

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It costs \$100,000 to build a prison cell and about \$30,000 to house, feed and guard an inmate each year.

Preventing crime and terrorism is much cheaper than dealing with the aftermath. Any police officer will tell you that most of the people they arrest have alcohol or drugs in their system when they commit the crime. We need to do a better job with drug and alcohol treatment so that people can turn their lives around and be good parents and citizens.

It's also easier to turn around the life of an eight-year-old than an adult. Teachers and police officers can tell you which kids are getting in trouble and will wind up in prison, and it's not too late to reach those children.

Early intervention with children works, and it's far cheaper — and more humane — than building more and more prisons.

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 Printed on recycled paper